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The Portrayal of Queer Subjectivity in German Vampire Film

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Introduction:

Vampire film has transformed throughout the ages, and each of these transformations offer a representation of historically specific anxieties during that time. Vampires are almost always portrayed as sexual deviants, and the film's representation of this sexual deviance offers commentary on how certain sexualities are viewed during the time period that the film is made. My thesis will show how the change in the vampire narrative in German film responds to changing perspectives on queer and female sexuality over time. I will show how F.W. Murnau's 1922 film *Nosferatu* presents queer desire as something that should inspire fear and could disrupt German national identity. Jess Franco's 1971 film *Vampyros Lesbos* presents lesbian sexuality as narcissistic and something to be enjoyed by the male gaze. Finally, my thesis will argue that Dennis Gansel's 2010 film *Wir sind die Nacht* [We are the Night] presents queers' way of life as a way to escape patriarchal and heteronormative constraints but is ultimately destructive and undesirable.

Much research exists on the cultural implications the explosion of vampire discourses during certain periods in American and British society. But much less research has been done on this similar phenomenon that occurs in German film. Perhaps this is due to the reduced influence of Germany's film industry on the international film market since the Weimar republic in comparison to the American and British film industry. In addition, there has been less interest in German studies to explore cultural studies approaches to the media in comparison to the United States and the United Kingdom (Kacandes 13). But by looking closely at German film and the implications of the popularity of certain films, we can learn more about German society at the time that these films were produced. Although the vampire phenomenon in explicitly German films was much less pronounced after the Weimar Republic in comparison to the United States

and the United Kingdom, the vampire genre was still popular among German audiences (Pavlović 107). In fact, the popularity of American and British vampire film allowed filmmakers to make vampire film in Germany even though the German film industry is significantly less powerful and therefore likely to make less money from their film production.

I have chosen to write about vampires because their representations often contain interesting implications about notions of gender and sexuality in the time that they were made. I focus on F.W. Murnau's 1922 film *Nosferatu*, Jess Franco's 1971 film *Vampyros Lesbos*, and Dennis Gansel's 2010 film *Wir sind die Nacht* because of their popularity in the time that they were made and their portrayals of gender and sexuality. These films were produced during periods of changing gender roles, relaxing attitudes towards sex, and increased transparency and acceptance of queer people. Surprisingly, I did not find much queer studies analysis of these films. In fact, I did not find much research on *Vampyros Lesbos* at all.

A fair amount of research has been done on the film *Nosferatu*, but my research will focus on how the film articulates queer desire as a threat to German national identity. Little queer analysis has been done on the film *Nosferatu*, even though the representation of queer desire is quite different from other vampire films because of the emphasis on emotional experience during expressionism. The aestheticization of the psychological inner workings of the mind in a way that inspires fear in the spectator pathologizes queer desire. This focus on queer desire rather than queer identity is quite different than other vampire films where the vampires produce queer identities in their production of vampires. In addition, this film intersects queer desire with female sexuality and foreign and Jewish sexuality in order to simultaneously represent multiple fears of the implications of social change that occurred during the Weimar Republic.

A lot of research has been done on the sexploitation vampire genre in the United States and Britain in the 1970s, but there has not been much focus on German vampire films of this time. Research on the film *Vampyros Lesbos* will help expand this research because although the film reiterates many tropes laid out by theorists Andrea Weiss and Bonnie Zimmerman, the film also subverts many of these tropes. Unlike many other vampire sexploitation films of this time, the camera focuses on the gaze of the woman who desires the lesbian, yet I will argue that the film sexualizes these women for the male gaze in a similar way that lesbian vampires in the Hammer films of the seventies are sexualized. Although the film focuses on the gaze of the female protagonist and her desire for the vampire, the gaze of the camera still focuses on exploiting this desire for the male gaze. This film also reinforces sexist tropes that lesbian sexuality is narcissistic, and this representation of narcissistic sexuality pathologizes queer women.

Very little research has been done on the contemporary vampire film *Wir sind die Nacht*. I will show how the film uses the vampires to explore queer ways of life, and how this way of life offers escape from patriarchal and heteronormative values of marriage and reproduction. In addition, the film explores queer spaces like the Berlin club scene. But the film ultimately problematizes this way of life by presenting the women's unrestrained sexuality as excessive and dangerous and by presenting life without marriage and reproduction as pathologizing to women.

Theoretical Frameworks:

I will show how these films participate in discourses that pathologize certain subjectivities. Foucault theorizes that the “great surface network” of sexuality “in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances are linked to a few major

strategies of knowledge and power (106).” Film participates in this “great surface network” of sexuality by creating knowledge around certain subjectivities, and this knowledge is embedded in power because knowledge produces power by reinforcing the power of the dominant group. Dominant discourse often pathologizes queer people in order to reinforce the power of heterosexuals.

The films I have chosen participate in a discourse that pathologizes certain subjectivities by creating knowledge surrounding certain subjectivities that delegitimize certain aspects of those subjectivities. *Nosferatu* pathologizes queer desire because it threatens the heterosexual reproductive family that traditional German society depends on; *Vampyros Lesbos* pathologizes queer sexualities by presenting them as narcissistic; and *Wir sind die Nacht* pathologizes queer ways of life because of their perceived destructive qualities.

Each of these films requires different additional theoretical frameworks, however, to understand the form of pathologization at work. I address each framework more specifically in the analysis below. The film *Nosferatu* aestheticizes Freud’s theory of the uncanny but suggests that queer desire ought to be repressed. I will show this film is informed by psychological discourse and indeed informs psychological discourse in a way that pathologizes queer sexual desire. I will utilize Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze to show how the film *Vampyros Lesbos* subverts lesbian sexuality to the male gaze even if the film focuses on the gaze of the female protagonist. The sexualization and fragmentation of heterosexual looking women posits lesbian desire for the male gaze rather than the female one. Jack Halberstam’s theory of “technologies of monstrosity” and “technologies of sexuality” shows how *Vampyros Lesbos* produces queer identities, and this production of queer identities allows these identities to be stigmatized with certain stereotypes. For example, *Vampyros Lesbos* presents the lesbian sexuality as narcissistic,

and this reiteration of this stereotype about lesbian sexuality dismisses its legitimacy. In order to show how the film *Wir sind die Nacht* portrays articulates a temporality that lies outside heteronormative values like marriage and reproduction, I will utilize Jack Halberstam's theory of queer temporality.

By looking at vampire film from a queer studies and Foucauldian perspective, I seek to see how the vampire narrative in German film and its portrayal of queer sexuality has changed over time. By examining how the films interact in a conversation with other films and showing how the film responds to the social change that occurs when the film was produced, I will show how these films contribute to a wider discourse. Queer subjectivities are regulated through discourse in a variety of ways, and this manner of regulation has changed as the vampire genre has transformed over time. I will begin with how the film *Nosferatu* portrays queer and active female desire through psychological, expressionist techniques and the implications of this psychological portrayal.

Queer Desire and the Weimar Republic in *Nosferatu*

F.W. Murnau's 1922 film *Nosferatu* is considered a quintessential expressionist film of German film history, and is the first cinematic rendition of Bram Stoker's 1896 novel *Dracula*. The film deviates from *Dracula* in ways that reflect the historically specific social and sexual anxieties during the Weimar Republic in Germany. The Weimar Republic was a democratic transition period between monarchy and National Socialism that occurred after Germany's loss in World War One. It was also a time of changing gender roles for women since women were gaining admittance in the public work sphere and social and sexual autonomy from men (McCormick 643). In addition, there was a new, increased transparency of homosexuality and gay subcultures. At the same time, many people held onto traditional values and were unhappy

with democracy and change in values. The film utilizes expressionist techniques in order to psychologically explore anxieties surrounding these social changes at this time. *Nosferatu* simultaneously represents and reproduces the anxieties surrounding social change in the Weimar republic concerning male fears of the New Woman, the transparency of homosexuality, and the fear of the social repercussions of Eastern immigrants and Jews.

We are introduced to the film with the newlywed couple Hutter (Gustav von Wangenheim) and Ellen (Greta Schröder) in an idyllic country setting. Hutter must leave Ellen in order to go to Transylvania to sell Graf Orlok a.k.a. Nosferatu (Max Schreck) a house located across the street from them. Hutter travels to Transylvania by horse, but upon his arrival, Hutter discovers that he is forced to stay at the castle for a long time which brings grief to his wife Ellen. There is a sexual tension between Nosferatu and Hutter. Nosferatu eventually bites Hutter, but Hutter does not remember what happened. In addition, Nosferatu expresses desire for Ellen when he sees a photograph of her in a locket.

After this discovery of a picture of Ellen, Nosferatu boards his coffin on the ship and travels to Germany. The coffins are filled with rats carrying the plague, and everyone on the ship dies from this disease. Hutter chases Nosferatu by horseback in order to stop him and save his wife. After Nosferatu arrives to the town, the whole town begins to die of the plague. Ellen finds the book about vampires that Romanian people gave Hutter when he stopped at a bar before reaching the castle. She finds out through this book that she can stop Nosferatu by distracting him until the sun comes up. Ellen allows him into her bedroom and allows him to feast on her. When the sun comes up Nosferatu disappears, and the town is freed from the plague.

The use of expressionism allowed Murnau to explore the psychological fear of queer desire and female sexual desire. Stephen Brockman defines expressionism as “a highly

psychological kind of art that seeks not what is happening on the outside...but to express what is happening on the inside within the psyche of an individual human being” (Brockman 49-50). Although Murnau’s film *Nosferatu* is considered one of the most quintessential expressionist films of Germany, theorists have argued against this placement of the film into the genre because of its naturalistic, realist settings (Roberts 45). In many expressionist films, settings reflect the psychological minds of the characters. For example, in the quintessential expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, houses and other scenery are jagged in order to suggest the internal psychological chaos that takes place in the minds of the characters. Although *Nosferatu* may not be through and through an expressionist film, Murnau uses expressionist techniques like shadows, chiascuro lighting, and doubles in order to explore the psyches of the characters, especially in terms of sexual repression. Indeed, these techniques are used particularly frequently when representing *Nosferatu* himself.

In fact, Murnau was alleged to be a homosexual himself, and this film seems to aestheticize his inner struggles of being homosexual in a country where homosexuality is criminalized and pathologized. At this time sex acts between two males were outlawed by paragraph 175 of the German penal code (Eisner 98). In addition, during this time period there was an explosion of discourses surrounding the connection between sexuality and psychology. For example, the German psychologist Richard von Kraft-Ebing published the book *Psychopathia Sexualis* which catalogued a range of “perversions” including homosexuality. The themes of queer sexuality in his films are often subtly revealed, yet repressed. Eisner notes in *The Haunted Screen* that “all of his films bear the impress of his inner complexity, of the struggle he waged within himself against a world in which he remained despairingly alien”

(98). Indeed, expressionism as a genre allowed Murnau to explore his own inner struggle because it aestheticizes the inner workings of the mind.

Nosferatu's transgression of gender and sexual norms is presented as something to fear with his utilization of the fear of the uncanny. F.W. aestheticizes the uncanny and plays with the idea of repression throughout the film with his use of shadows, doubles, sleepwalking, and the character's loss of memory. Sigmund Freud defines the "unheimlich" as "alles, was ein Geheimnis, im Verborgenen bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist" (Freud 236) ["everything that ought have remained hidden and secret that is revealed¹"]. He describes the uncanny as the fear of the repressed, but he does not delve into what social structures and discourses may define what should be repressed. Popular discourses and institutions define what "normal" sexuality is. *Nosferatu* presents queer sexuality as something that should remain repressed and should incite fear when this sexuality is revealed, and this representation pathologizes queer sexuality.

By looking at *Nosferatu* as the double of Hutter, we can understand how *Nosferatu* comes to represent the homosexual desires that Hutter seeks to repress. The homoeroticism between Hutter and *Nosferatu* is rather explicit and obvious. In one scene, *Nosferatu* stares at him with his wide open eyes from above his newspaper. The circles around his eyes are exaggeratedly black, and their darkness implies that *Nosferatu* is constantly staring at him waiting to make his move. This incessant staring indicates a strong desire. Hutter cuts himself, and *Nosferatu* hastily gets up from his seat and grabs his finger and begins to suck it. Then *Nosferatu* walks towards him while Hutter backs away in terror. *Nosferatu* backs him into a corner with two chairs and asks, "Shall we not sit together awhile, my dear friend?" The camera iris-outs, and the rest of the night is left a mystery. The iris-out gives an appearance of the iris of a camera lens closing, and the spectator sees the scene through an ever-dwindling circle. Murnau uses this iris transition throughout the

¹ My translation

film, and with his usage, it gives the illusion of shadows closing in on the scene. It marks the end of Hutter's memory while the rest of his memory is repressed.

Hutter wakes up the next morning and forgets everything that happened the previous night. That narrator exclaims, "As soon as the sun rose, Hutter too was freed from the shadows of the night." The "shadows" seem to imply shared homosexual exchanges of desire that the narrator and Hutter feel should be repressed, and indeed, he does repress it. He simply wonders where he possibly could have acquired two "mosquito bites" placed so closely together. However, the spectator knows that these "mosquito bites" are from the sexual biting that took place during the time of Hutter's lapsed memory. The iris-out emphasizes Hutter's repressed experience with Nosferatu because the shadows of the iris close the scene, and the camera iris-ins when the mysterious exchange ends.

Before Nosferatu bites Hutter a second time, the camera presents Nosferatu walking through a phallic looking door. The camera uses a long shot in order to emphasize the phallic door and Nosferatu's long statute. Indeed, Nosferatu, himself, looks rather phallic as he walks through this door with his long, tall statue and his pointy, bald head. This frame seems to present Nosferatu's body as a fetish object that substitutes for the actual sexual biting that the film never shows in order to emphasize the homoeroticism between the two men and the fear that Hutter feels for his own homoerotic desire. Hutter reacts to him walking this door with terror, and hides his head with a sheet. Nosferatu walks towards Hutter, and the audience is only presented with the shadow of Nosferatu and his claws out hovering over Hutter's body. Nosferatu's shadow appears to be a demon in order to physically portray the inner demons that Hutter struggles with. Once again, Hutter seems to forget whatever happened because he notes that he must "investigate the horrors of the previous nights." The fact that Hutter consistently forgets the actual biting part

implies that he represses the sexual experience because of the fear that he feels of his own homosexuality.



Figure 1: Nosferatu walking through a phallic looking door



Figure 2: Nosferatu's shadow hovering over Hutter's body

Hutter's repressed homosexual desire becomes clearer when one looks at his loveless marriage with Ellen. He initially rejects Ellen when she seeks his affection, and he continues to

reject her affection throughout the film. He often denies her kisses even when she tries to kiss him before his departure to Transylvania. His letter to Ellen is pathetic and completely absent of any desire. He does not express any desire for Ellen until his homosexual encounter with Nosferatu. It appears that his sudden desire for his wife comes out of a need to prove his heterosexuality.

Interestingly, many advocates for the decriminalization of homosexuality utilized psychological discourse to show how homosexuality is natural and biological. For example, one of the most renowned advocates for the decriminalization of homosexuality at this time was a German psychologist named Magnus Hirschfeld who founded the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* [Institute for Sexual Science]. Sex reformers like Magnus Hirschfeld sought to decriminalize homosexuality by using scientific research to show that homosexuality was a scientific fact and not the result of moral degradation. He argued that homosexuality was a third sex and an intersexual state that lie between the poles of complete maleness and femaleness (Schmidt 128). His theory posited homosexuality as a sort of anomaly that occurred in nature. By making it into an anomaly, homosexuality is posited as “natural, but abnormal.” Since homosexuality was something that occurred in nature, Hirschfeld argued that homosexual acts should be decriminalized. Indeed, he was among many sexologists that argued that homosexuality should be decriminalized because of its biological origins, like Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Auguste Forel, Havelock Ellis, and Albert Moll (Schmidt 129). Perhaps by focusing on the psychology of Hutter and his queer desire in *Nosferatu*, one could argue that film participates in a discourse that seeks to posit Hutter’s desire as natural.

Although pathologizing homosexuality may have helped decriminalize homosexuality during this time period, queer people had to fight the pathologization of homosexuality in later

generations. The medicalization of homosexuality became a new form of regulation by producing abnormality in opposition to the “normal” and “healthy.” This classification of homosexuals as mentally ill reinforced the power of heterosexuals. Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality* that since the 18th century, “the new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals” (42-43). The medicalization of sexuality and the pathologization of homosexuals allowed for a classification of individuals. This classification allowed for better surveillance and control over bodies. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that in order to more effectively discipline bodies, it requires “multiple separations, individualizing distributions, an organization in depth of surveillance and control, and intensification and ramification of power” in order to “use procedures of individualization to mark exclusion” (198; 199). One cannot efficiently discipline people for simply the sexual acts they engage in, but by creating perverse identities by classifying a certain type of person, individuals become easier to regulate because individuals can be systematically identified as deviants. Scientific discourses that designate homosexuals as “sick” and “abnormal” and heterosexuals as “healthy” and “normal” reinforce the hierarchy of heterosexuals over homosexuals.

In fact, some homosexual rights activists responded to the implied pathologization of psychological and biological research done by sexologists of the time, and some people took scientific research done by these sexologists to do further research on how to “fix” the “disorder.” The spokesperson Benedict Friedländer of the “Gemeinschaft der Eigenen” (community of our own), a group of homosexuals whose ideas were published in the journal *Der Eigene* rejected the use of biological research to advocate for homosexual rights (Schmidt 131). Friedländer proclaims, “We shall *not* attempt to win over the sympathy of the government and

the members of parliament by using scientific evidence of an alleged anomaly; this is a non-masculine way to effect the abolition of the law which hangs over our heads” (qtd. in Schmidt 131). He disagreed with the viewpoint that homosexuality was an anomaly, and he rejected the emasculating implications of Hirschfeld’s research. He thought that this psychological and biological research posited homosexuals as “in themselves—something abnormal” and turned them into “psychological monsters” and “pitiful half-women” (qtd. in Schmidt 131). Friedländer contextualizes the idea that homosexuality is abnormal, gendered, and pathological.

Furthermore, some people took scientific research done by these sexologists to do further research on how to “cure” the “disorder.” Anatomist Steinach picked up Hirschfeld’s theories in order to “fix” the anomaly in gay men. He argued that homosexuality was caused by an “imperfectly developed gonad anlage” and he could cure it by transplanting the testicular of a heterosexual man into a homosexual in order to improve the effect of the “heterosexual” testicle (Schmidt 133). In addition, the patient was unilaterally castrated to make sure the “hermaphrodite” testicular tissue was removed (Schmidt 133). Hirschfeld agreed with Steinach’s ideas about the cause of homosexuality although he did not approve of the surgeries that he performed” (Schmidt 133). One can see how positing homosexual as a biological anomaly can worsen the acceptance of homosexuality in society since now homosexuality can be fixed because homosexuals are “imperfectly developed.” The health of the homosexual is viewed in relation of the health of heterosexual, and the homosexual testicles are assumed to be unhealthy and abnormal versions of heterosexual’s.

In addition to the changing sentiment towards homosexuality, women were gaining sexual and social autonomy with their access to the public sphere and to contraception. In 1908, women were allowed to attend universities, and women expanded their participation in the labor

market during World War 1 (McCormick 643-644). Women were gaining economic independency and entrance into the public social sphere. Since women were gaining economic independency, women no longer had to be economically dependent on men. Consequently, women could choose not to get married and have children. Indeed, sexual norms were changing so that sex increasingly and openly took place outside of marriage. In addition, women and other human rights advocates were organizing to repeal paragraph 218 of the German penal code that outlawed abortion (Weitz 304). Although abortion was not legal, it occurred frequently, contraception was also becoming more widely available (Weitz 304). With more access to abortion and contraception, women had more control over their reproduction, and this allowed them to enjoy economic, social, and sexual freedom.

After the loss of World War One, minority groups were blamed for the political and social chaos of the time. McCormick argues in his essay “‘From *Caligari* to Detrich’ Sexual, Social, and Cinematic Discourses in Weimar Film,” that the “male psyche...was haunted by paranoia that a conspiracy of others—women, socialists, Jews, homosexuals, foreigners—had humiliated the German fatherland and were hindering efforts to resurrect its power [sic]” (648). The conservative Right feared the social implications of the changing norms of society and the presence of certain minority groups because they felt that they contributed to the chaos of an already politically chaotic time, and they wanted to restore the values that they felt German national identity depended on. *Nosferatu* wraps up many of these anxieties into one body as he simultaneously evokes fears of women’s newly gained sexual autonomy and social power, while also invokes fears of homosexual desire. I will also show how *Nosferatu* invokes fears of reproduction of foreign and Jewish bodies.

Nosferatu's queer embodiment allows him to incite fears of women's newly gained social power. Nosferatu transcends the boundaries of masculine/feminine embodiment because of his non-phallic sexuality. Christopher Craft argues in his essay "Kiss Me with those Red Lips" that vampires, especially Dracula or vampires based off Dracula, blur gender boundaries and sexual codes. Male vampires are coded feminine because of their non-phallic, oral sexuality. Craft suggests that the vampire represents anxieties over the "gender based categories of penetrating and the receptive" (109). The vampire mouth penetrates, which is a traditionally masculine sexual function; yet it is also receptive, which is a traditionally feminine sexual function because the mouth is an orifice. Nosferatu is both male and female because of his "oral genitalia." In addition, Nosferatu reflects the fear of castration. Sigmund Freud argues that women's genitalia incites the fear of castration in the male ego because their genitalia appear castrated, and therefore, reminds men of the threat of castration ("Female Sexuality" 228). Since Nosferatu's genitalia consist of a mouth with sharp pointed teeth, his mouth signifies a sort of vagina dentata. Like women, he also incites a fear of castration in the male spectator.

This transgression of gender norms and feminine embodiment of the threat of castration invokes anxieties of the feminization of men in the Weimar Republic and social threat of women. McCormick labels the anxieties in Weimar culture as a "discourse of castration." He uses this term to refer to "a very broad, evocative, and hyperbolic sense to specify a complex of anxieties around loss of power, control, and mastery" (McCormick 645). After the loss of the war, the presence of women in the public social and economic sphere, and the presence of homosexuality, discourses have reflected this anxiety about male loss of power. Nosferatu literally represents a threat of castration with pointy, oral genitalia. In addition, his feminization represents the fear of

the loss of masculinity around men, as the phallus is often the symbol of power. He transcends gender roles as he is both feminine and powerful, and this feminine power threatens male power.

After Nosferatu acts on his desire for Hutter, he turns to Hutter's wife. One could also look at Nosferatu as a double of Ellen as well. He becomes a symbol for Ellen's repressed sexual desire of being in a marriage absent of passion and affection. Ian Roberts notes that "she is very much a plaything of Hutter and the patriarchal society within her repressed self is trapped" (Roberts 48). She does not seem to do anything but wait around for Hutter beyond dull, domestic duties like embroidering, and she does not seem to ever leave the house. Her pale skin and dark eyes as well as the fact that she is often clad in black clothing indicate that she feels dissatisfaction with life. In addition, the affection that she displays for Hutter does not appear to be returned. When Hutter leaves, she chases him for multiple kisses, and she appears distraught over his departure while he seems eager and happy to embark on a journey. His letters to her are short, dry and affectionless. Even though Hutter does not display much affection for her, she is stuck in this marriage because gender norms of the time do not permit her to escape this loveless marriage.

The cinematography portrays Ellen as desiring Nosferatu. Ian Roberts argues in *German Expressionist Cinema* that the eyeline between Ellen and the vampire often match even when they are separated (48). Ellen waits by the sea even though she knows that he is travelling by land. While she is waiting, the narrator claims that she is "pining for her beloved." But there is a subtle uncertainty of who exactly her "beloved" actually is. In one scene, the camera switches from the image of Ellen sleepwalking to an image of the front of a ship from the viewpoint of the captain. The spectator knows that the captain at this point is Nosferatu. Then the camera quickly shifts to a view of powerful waves hitting the water. Then the camera returns to Ellen looking

back smiling and saying, “He’s coming. I must go meet him.” Ellen sleepwalks quite often throughout the film, and dreams often signify repressed desire. In addition, the fact that the camera switches to her sleepwalking to Nosferatu’s perspective suggests that the person that she talks about is not Hutter, but rather Nosferatu. The “restless sea” is a commonly used symbol of desire and repression. Indeed, Ellen often waits by the sea even though she knows Hutter is travelling by land. This crosscutting reveals Ellen’s desire for Nosferatu rather than Hutter. The cinematic subtlety of the representation of Ellen desiring Nosferatu reflects her own need to repress this desire because of the gender norms of the time that restricts female sexuality.

Perhaps Ellen does not sacrifice her sexuality for Nosferatu, but rather she acts on her repressed sexual desire. The shadow of Nosferatu reaching for Ellen’s breast after she lets him into her house signifies the end of the repression of her sexual desire. The fact that his hand is represented as a shadow signifies the guilt that Ellen feels because this sexual desire should have been repressed. This ending of Ellen cheating on her lover with Nosferatu creates anxiety in the viewer of the changing gender roles in the Weimar Republic.



Figure 3: The shadow of Nosferatu's fist over Ellen's heart

In addition, this ending of implied copulation of Ellen and Nosferatu, and this interruption of married love between two Germans incites fears of racial mixing and the decline

of the German population. Not only did women's social freedom disturb conservative right moral sentiment, but it also was posed as a threat to the nation. After World War One, Germany's population significantly decreased due to the deaths of German soldiers during the war and the fact that women were reproducing less. In 1910 there were 128 live births per 1,000 women of reproductive age. But in 1922 this number dropped to 90 in 1922. This number continued to drop to 67.3 in 1930 (Weitz 145). Indeed in 1933, Germany had the lowest birth rate in Europe. This decrease of population was attributed to the values of the "new woman," the prevalence of abortion and contraception use, and the prevalence of homosexuality. The conservative right feared that the urban "new woman" would be in danger of placing individual pleasure before the family and nation and deny their "natural" duties in the sphere of motherhood and child rearing (Weitz 327). Ellen is acting on her individual desire for Nosferatu even though this act may risk her marriage between her and her German husband and the possibility of a mixed-racial child if she were to reproduce. Since women were pressured to reproduce to insure national identity, a German woman copulating with a non-German person would be seen as a threat to German national identity especially when the German population was decreasing.

Indeed, Nosferatu is often read as a Jew for his exaggerated Jewish features, and discourses often designated Jews at this time as racially other from other Germans. Nosferatu's grotesque physical features reinforce anti-Semitic discourse that posits the Jew as degenerate. Halberstam notes that Dracula's physical characteristics resemble those of how Jews were described at this time. Murnau exaggerates these features described in Stoker's *Dracula* to the point that Nosferatu looks inhuman. In the 1880s newspaper *Libre Parole* which calls for the mass expulsion of Jews, the French Nationalist Socialist Eduard Drumont identifies Jews' physical characteristics as "the hooked nose, shifty eyes, protruding ears, elongated body, flat

feet and moist hands” (qtd. in Halberstam 93). Indeed, Schreck’s nose is made to resemble a hooked nose with makeup, his ears are also grossly elongated, and of course Schreck was a considerably tall actor for his time measuring 6’3. The hairs added to his eyebrows to appear extremely bushy also seem to suggest that he physically trying to represent the exaggerated features of a Jew. The fact that these “Jewish” features are so exaggerated to the point of dehumanization suggests that Jews are degenerate and closer to animals than the German Christians and aligns Jewishness with the threat of vampirism.

During this time, physiognomy was very popular, and these features used to describe the Jew, like the hooked nose and the shifty eyes, were also associated with the physical features of a criminal (Halberstam 93). Jewishness at this time was linked to racial degeneracy, and this discourse surrounding the racial degeneracy was used to warn Germans about the possible degeneracy of mating with Jews. This instance of biological racism was used to regulate sexuality by discouraging procreation of German Christians with Jews. Nosferatu’s grotesque body incites fears of the degeneracy of the Jew with its animal-like and criminal-like features.

Murnau further emphasizes the fear of procreation of German women with Jewish men is with his use of shadows to portray the uncanniness of Nosferatu’s occupation of the liminal space between human/animal. When Nosferatu walks towards Ellen’s bedroom, we see only his shadow projected on the wall, and in this shadow, his talons grow and he becomes increasingly animal-like. This transformation is linked to his sexuality as it occurs before he enters Ellen’s bedroom. His sexuality becomes increasingly animal-like, and the fact that his animal-like features are linked to his Jewishness implies a sort of sexual degeneracy of Jews. We only see this transformation from the shadows, and this infers that this portrayal of animal-like sexuality

ought to be hidden since Jewish procreation with German Christian women was a cause of anxiety at this time.



Figure 4: The shadow of Nosferatu's claws growing before he enters Ellen's bedroom

Nosferatu does not produce vampire progeny like many other vampire films do, including *Vampyros Lesbos* and *Wir Sind die Nacht*. The film designates the production of queer desire as threatening rather than the production of queer identities. Queer desire threatens the German heterosexual nuclear family in this film because Nosferatu's foreign sexuality, which inspires homoerotic desire in Hutter and non-marital sexuality in Ellen, threatens the stability of Ellen and Hutter's relationship who are potential producers and protectors of the traditional German family. This film participates in a discourse that pathologizes queer desire by portraying it as something that ought to be repressed and feared for its potential for to disrupt German national identity. In *Vampyros Lesbos*, not only is queer desire threatening, but also queer sexual identities. The production of queer identities in *Vampyros Lesbos* pathologizes lesbian sexuality because of its threat to the male ego.

Lesbian Sexuality in Vampyros Lesbos and the Male Gaze

Not much research has been done on the films of the Spanish director Jess Franco because academics do not feel that his film genres that are appropriate for academic research.

The horror genre is considered one of the lowest film genres shortly before pornography, and Jess Franco plays with both of these genres; in fact, he often blurs the boundaries between the two (Pavlović 108). These genres were considered especially low in Spanish society, and therefore he did not gain much of a following from Spanish audiences. Franco was much more successful in Germany and the United States. In fact, he started making films in countries like Germany and France in order to gain a bigger audience (Pavlović 107). The film *Vampyros Lesbos* is one of these films that he made abroad. He filmed it in Germany and Turkey with German and Spanish actors and in the German language. It may seem odd to some people to include this film in my paper that is explicitly about German vampire film, but this film was actually rather popular among German audiences of the time although it remains rather unknown today. It was indeed the most successful film that Jess Franco ever made (Pavlović 107). It offers interesting portrayals of gender and sexuality and existed in conversation with other vampire film of the time. This film was made financially possible because of the English Hammer sexploitation vampire industry (Pavlović 107). In fact, without the immense popularity of the Hammer genre, this film probably would not have been so widely watched. It is important to analyze how this film exists in a conversation with the Hammer films and how it deviates from them because by reiterating certain ideas and representations, it reiterates tropes that could create regulatory norms.

We are introduced to the film by the vampire Nadine (Soledad Miranda) performing a sort of play to an audience that includes Linda (Ewa Strömberg) and her lover Omar (Andrés Monales). She is wearing nothing but lingerie and begins her play by her longingly staring at and kissing her own mirror image. She then goes up to a mannequin and starts taking off her lingerie and putting it on the mannequin. She touches and kisses up and down the mannequin's body.

Linda stares entranced by this scene while her lover awkwardly glances around. Linda talks to her therapist Dr. Steiner (Paul Muller) about her sexual dissatisfaction in her relationship. The therapist tells her to take up a lover.

Linda is a lawyer and eventually goes to Istanbul to deal with Nadine's inheritance. Nina and Linda go swimming and bathe in the sun together. Nadine gives Linda wine, and Linda passes out. She wakes up with her shirt undone and Nadine staring longingly for her with blood on her lips. They have sex and Nina bites her neck and sucks her blood. When Linda goes searching for her, she finds Nina in a swimming pool appearing to be dead. Then Linda wakes up in Dr. Alwin Seward's (Dennis Price) clinic with amnesia and cannot remember her name or her address. Dr. Alwin Seward tells her that in order to kill the vampire Nadine, she must either split her head with an ax or pierce it with a pole. Dr. Seward's other patient Agra (Heidrun Kussin) is another one of Nadine's victims who has been raving about Nadine throughout the film, and she announces that Nina is coming to visit Seward. When she arrives, Seward asks Nadine to initiate him into the vampire world. Nadine tells her servant Morpho to kill him, and tells Agra that she will not return.

Linda's lover Omar meets with Linda's therapist Dr. Steiner to track Linda down. Linda arrives at Nadine's house where Nadine is lying in bed begging for some of her blood. Linda refuses and instead stabs her in the eye with a knitting needle. Nadine's body disappears and her servant Morpho kills himself. Omar arrives later and tells her it was all a dream, but Linda denies this.

While *Nosferatu* presents queer sexuality as something to be repressed and hidden, *Vampyros Lesbos* presents queer sexuality as something to be revealed. The few writers that talk about Jess Franco write enthusiastically about how his films transgress norms about gender and

sexuality. But I will show how talking about sex is not necessarily transgressive, and in fact, it often leads to the regulation of sexuality. I will explore how his film *Vampyros Lesbos* actually reiterates problematic tropes and stereotypes that pathologize lesbian sexuality. In a couple ways, *Vampyros Lesbos* disrupts tropes of the sexploitation vampire genre of the seventies. For example, there is great emphasis on the female gaze, which may appear to attract a female and lesbian audience, but I will show how this film is created for a male gaze. *Vampyros Lesbos* uses sexualization and pathology to disrupt the threat of lesbianism and female sexuality to the heterosexual male ego.

Although *Nosferatu* contributed to the discursive regulation of sexuality by presenting homosexuality as something that ought to be repressed, *Vampyros Lesbos* presents sexuality as something that ought to be “liberated” from this repression which regulates sexuality in a different way. In her book *Despotic Bodies and Transgressive Bodies*, Tatjana Pavlović argues that “Franco imagined a radically different women’s space from the films of the time that were saturated by an idealized picture of woman/mother within the nuclear family and the nation” (100). Although Pavlović created a different space for women to occupy, this presentation of a new space pressures women to occupy this space, and this new space may be intentionally created for the benefit of men. In addition, this type of film may be new to Spain, but his films were made possible by the sexploitative vampire films in other countries, like the popularity of the Hammer franchise in England. In fact, his films were more popular in Germany and the United States than in Spain (Pavlović 107). It was no coincidence that *Vampyros Lesbos* was filmed in Germany and intended for a German audience.

The popularity of the film among German and American audiences suggests that it reflects a sort of “spirit of the age” of these countries. Foucault notes in *Archaeology of*

Knowledge that this “spirit” “enables us to establish between the simultaneous or successive phenomena of a given period of community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflection, or which allows the sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation” (22). The popularity of these films reflects a collective conscious of the age in which these films are produced. This collective consciousness is constructed by other discourses. For example, English Hammer sexploitative vampire films were popular at this time, and *Vampyros Lesbos* engages in a discourse with these films around a certain type of sexuality that film audiences want to see. These films create a sort of knowledge around sexuality which sexualizes lesbian sexuality in order to stimulate a heterosexual male audience. Foucault notes in *The History of Sexuality* that “there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourse” (27). The discourse that creates this collective consciousness excludes many voices. Although the film may be popular, it does not necessarily represent the subjectivities that the film seeks to portray. I will argue that the film silences the reality of lesbian sexuality in order to portray it for the male gaze. The individual does not construct knowledge around queer sexuality, but rather “power-knowledge” that constructs the forms and possible domains of knowledge (*Discipline Punish* Foucault 28). Knowledge reaffirms the position of those in power. In this case, I will argue that sexploitative vampire films like *Vampyros Lesbos* reaffirm the power of heterosexual male. Foucault argues in his book *History of Sexuality* that talking about sex does not necessarily transgress sexual norms, but rather it often creates new sexual norms.

In this book, Foucault talks about his theory of the “repressive hypothesis.” He argues against that the idea that talking about sex is a transgressive act itself; in fact, he argues that since the 18th century, there has been a proliferation of discourses surrounding sex, and these discourses,

in effect, regulate sexuality. He claims that this multiplication of discourses regarding sex act as an exercise of power itself because there is “an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail” (Foucault 18). The agencies of power seek sexuality to be spoken about in a specific way that benefits them. Discourses about sexuality have the potential to control sexuality. For example, discourses that pathologize queer sexuality and posit heterosexual sexuality as normal and healthy sexuality encourage heterosexual reproduction and grant privilege to heterosexuals. People internalize dominant discourse as natural and normal (Foucault 25).

The overt sexualization of women’s bodies and female desire is not necessarily for the benefit for women. This encouragement of the “liberation” of female sexuality through film often posits this liberation for the male gaze rather than the female one. Women are encouraged to be sexual for the benefit of men rather than for their own pleasure. This discourse reinforces heterosexual male’s power over female bodies, and women internalize the discourse that they should be sexual for men’s pleasure, and they view this behavior as normal. In previous generations, dominant discourse posited active female sexuality as abnormal and should only occur in marriage to produce children.

The presence of the lesbian vampire may seem to threaten the male ego rather than pleasure it. Research about the Hammer vampire sexploitation films of the seventies has debated whether the vampire film of the seventies poses a threat to male dominance and creates a space for lesbian pleasure, or at least has the potential to, or if it in fact reinforces male control and is intended for a heterosexual male spectator. Little research has been done on Jess Franco’s contribution to the genre, and I believe a deeper analysis of this film will add to the conversation

because of his attempt to focus on the gaze of the female protagonist and the fact that it is a female that kills the vampire threat rather than a male. David Baker argues in his article “Seduced and Abandoned: Lesbian Vampires on Screen: 1968-74” that Bonnie Zimmer and Andrea Weiss reduce the heterogeneity of vampire film at this time to a trope that does not hold true when looking at vampire films outside the Hammer film franchise (555). By looking at other European vampire films, we can complicate our understanding the genre’s representation of gender and sexuality at this time. I agree that further research needs to be done, but I would like to complicate his surface-level readings of the films by offering a more complex reading of Jess Franco’s film *Vampyros Lesbos*.

Nadine’s queer penetrative sexuality would seem to represent a threat to the need for male sexuality. Nosferatu represents the anxieties of emasculation of German society after World War One by his feminization and his literal embodiment of the threat of castration, but the “masculine” sexuality of Nadine focuses on the fear of the potential of female sexuality replacing male sexuality. Craft notes that Victorian gender codes “constrained the mobility of sexual desire and varieties of genital responsibility of vigorous appetite, while requiring the more passive female to ‘suffer and be still’” (108). Although vampires of the seventies are rather far removed from Victorian gender codes, these gender norms still have a hold on society. He continues that the “demonism” of the female vampire is her “power to penetrate” (Craft 109). Nadine transgresses gender norms with her penetrative sexuality. Lesbian sexuality is often questioned by heterosexual males because of the absence of penetration during sex. But her penetrative sexuality may threaten the heterosexual male ego because it replaces the sexual function of the male. Women can enjoy other women while also enjoying penetration.

Indeed, Andrea Weiss argues in her book *Vampires and Violets* that the vampire films of the seventies set up a bisexual love triangle between the female vampire, a female, and a male, where the female vampire threatens the relationship between two heterosexual lovers (90). The vampire Nadine threatens the heterosexual relationship between Linda and Omar as Linda cheats on her lover and falls in love with Nadine. Weiss argues that the “lesbian vampire provokes and articulates anxieties in the heterosexual male spectator, only for the film to quell those anxieties and reaffirm his maleness through the vampire’s ultimate destruction” (Weiss 88). Nadine is ultimately destroyed, but the fact that Linda destroys her and not Linda’s heterosexual lover may complicate Weiss’s paradigm of the seventies vampire trope.

Although Linda kills Nadine, a male authoritative figure still influences her to make this decision, and this influence decreases her agency as a woman to make this decision. David Baker argues in his article “Seduced and Abandoned: Lesbian Vampires on Screen: 1968-74” that the reason that Weiss’s paradigm does not hold true for Franco’s film *Vampyros Lesbos* is because it is ultimately Linda, “the modern ‘working woman,’ who resists the vampiric relationship and kills Nadine out of compassion” (561). Baker suggests that because she is an empowered, independent working woman, she is capable to making decisions for her herself, unlike many other female protagonists who need their male lovers to kill the lovers for them. Indeed, the psychologist Dr. Alwin Seward ultimately gives Linda the decision whether or not to kill Nadine. In addition, the fact that Omar, Linda’s male lover, arrives late to the scene with the intention of killing Nadine calls attention to its own subversion of the vampire trope where the male lover kills the lesbian threat.

But although Linda ultimately makes the decision, it is still the male psychologist who tells her to do so. Indeed, Linda passively listens to psychologists throughout the film because of

her own uncertainty about her sanity. It was a psychologist who told her to pick up another lover in the first place. She was only able to allow herself to explore her sexuality with Nadine after listening to a male authority who allowed her to do so. Her privileging of the psychologists' decisions over her own hinders her agency as a woman.

In fact, the pathologization of Linda and her double, Agra, justifies the murder of Nadine. Nadine does not kill anyone throughout the film, yet the women she sucks the blood from suffer from mental illness after their involvement with her. Nadine needs to be killed because of the disease she causes in her victims. This pathologization of these women for their involvement with Nadine is entrenched in a history of pathologization of lesbian sexuality. This film also reiterates the longstanding, problematic trope that lesbian sexuality is narcissistic. At the beginning of the movie, Nadine is presenting a performance to an audience in the film. Nadine walks onto the stage, and then she immediately walks to her reflection in the mirror instead of to the woman at the side of the stage. She is shown erotically kissing her reflection in the mirror, and then she begins dancing in front of it. This obsession with the mirror image implies a prevalence of narcissism in Nadine. After investigating Nadine's fascination with her own reflection, the camera tilts to show the reflection of the mannequin in the mirror. The camera then zooms in on the reflection of the mannequin in the mirror in order to show the spectator what Nadine is not paying attention to because she is so absorbed with her own body. She eventually goes to the mannequin and starts touching it and putting her clothes onto the mannequin. The fact that her "lover" is presented as a mannequin assumes that she sees the women that she engages with as lifeless and without an individual identity of her own. She puts her clothes on the mannequin in order to make the mannequin appear a reflection of herself. This invokes the longstanding trope that lesbians are narcissistic and are attracted to women because

these women reflect images of themselves. This trope is based on the sexist trope that women are vain.

The mannequin is supposed to represent how Nadine transforms her lovers into images of herself through vampirism because of her own narcissistic longings for her own self. Although this representation of lesbian sexuality as narcissistic may be an individual experience of Nadine, it reaffirms a discourse that pathologizes and dismisses lesbian sexuality. Indeed, this trope takes place in many vampire films of this time period. Weiss notes that the vampire films *Twins of Evil* and *The Vampire Lovers* use this trope. The mannequin appears just like Linda and foreshadows the relationship between Nadine and Linda. In fact, the camera oscillates between the face of Linda and the face of the mannequin. Indeed, after Linda's first romantic encounter with Nadine, she loses her identity. Nadine confirms that she bewitches her lovers so that they lose their identity, and so that she can become them.



Figure 6: Nadine admiring her reflection at the beginning of her performance



Figure 5: Nadine taking off her clothes to place on the mannequin



Figure 7: Nadine kissing the mannequin and making it move in order for it to touch her

I mentioned earlier how gay rights activists in the twenties transformed homosexuality into an illness, but in the seventies, gay rights activists were fighting for the removal of homosexuality from medical discourse. Homosexuality was not removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the American Psychological Association (APA) until 1973. With the help of the activism surrounding this removal, the US Public Health Service declared that homosexuality was not a pathology in 1978 (Bernstein 551). This film inadvertently contributes to this discourse that gay rights activists and gay liberationists were fighting against by presenting lesbian sexuality as narcissistic.

The threat that the vampire poses in *Vampyros Lesbos* is that she will produce queer sexual identities that will interrupt the victim's heterosexual relationship. Nosferatu poses a threat because he produces abject desire in Hutter and Ellen, but he does not produce vampires himself. Jack Halberstam argues in his book *Skin Shows* that vampires are "technologies of sexuality." He notes that "the vampire is not lesbian, homosexual, or heterosexual; the vampire represents the production of sexuality itself" (100). In films like *Vampyros Lesbos*, the threat of the vampire is the production of more vampires. They create vampires in their own image, and the vampire's victim takes on an identity of the vampire, and the identity of the vampire is linked to its queer sexuality. Not only does Nadine inspire queer desire in Linda, but she transforms Linda's heterosexual, human sexuality into a queer vampire identity. Indeed, Nadine strips her victims of their identities and creates them into versions of her. Linda cannot even remember her name after Nadine bites her. I discussed earlier how psychological discourse has the potential to regulate individuals in a more efficient and effective way than the criminalization of same sex acts. The transformation of Nadine's identity into a queer one through her literal transformation

into a vampire allows the film to pathologize queer identities rather than simply pathologize queer desire. For example, it reinforces the idea that lesbians, in general, are narcissistic.

In fact, not only did Nadine convert Linda in the film, but she also transformed Agra, who is in a mental hospital the whole time. Agra literally loses her sanity from her transmutation from a heterosexual human to a queer vampire. Agra cannot even return to her heterosexual relationship with her husband Memmet after her involvement with Nadine even though Nadine has lost interest with Agra. The film implies that Agra's loss of sanity is due to Nadine's lesbian narcissism. The doubling of Linda through Agra further reinforces this pathologizing trope that lesbians are narcissistic.

Bonnie Zimmermann talks about the potential of these vampire narratives to actually be liberating to women in her article "Daughters of Darkness." She argues that it is not a coincidence that so many vampire films appeared featuring violent queer female vampires during the birth of the second wave feminist movement. Because of the influence of sexual revolution, the feminist movement, and the gay liberation movement of the seventies, it has become more socially acceptable for women to explore their sexuality beyond heterosexual marriage. In addition, the increased economic independence of women allows women to resist the institution of marriage and economic dependency on men. Zimmermann argues that "the function of the lesbian vampire is to contain attraction between women within the same boundaries of sexual violence, to force it into a patriarchal model of sexuality" (4). Lesbian desire is portrayed as something to be enjoyed by the male gaze in the safety of the cinema, but the lesbian threat is often destroyed at the end of the movie. But Zimmermann argues that the lesbian vampire has the potential to represent a liberating and empowering for women depending on how the film is framed.

Unfortunately the presentation of Nadine with a back story of sexual abuse and the emphasis on fetishistic scopophilia diffuses the vampire's threat to the male ego. Karen Boyle argues in her article "Seeing (as) Violence: Film, Feminism, and the Male Gaze" that femme fatales are often given back stories of sexual abuse. This is due to Hollywood's discomfort with women who kill in comparison with men who kill (Boyle 152). Nadine's back story of sexual abuse creates a victim out of the woman who would normally be regarded as threatening. Nadine becomes a vampire when Count Dracula saves her from a male raping her. She notes that after that moment, she would hate all men. Not only does this victimize Nadine to diffuse her threat, but it also seems to imply that she is a lesbian only because of her history of sexual abuse.

In addition, the vampire is turned into a fetish object for the consumption of the male spectator. Mulvey argues that the presence of female sexuality presents the threat of castration to the male spectator, and one way that film diffuses this threat is through turning the threat into a fetish object (840). The relationship between Nadine and Linda is constantly sexualized, and their body parts are often fragmented in order to diffuse their threat.

Interestingly, Franco calls attention to the pleasure that the spectator gains from watching this film. The scene in which Nadine seduces the mannequin is repeated half way through the film. This performance acts as a sort of play within a play in order to offer commentary on the film itself. Although in the first performance, the camera oscillates between the performance and Linda's gaze, the lengthy erotic performance is performed once again without Linda's gaze. The camera fragments the bodies of Nadine and the lifelike mannequin in order to allow to the spectator the enjoyment of looking. The only variation of this performance is that Nadine literally sucks the blood of the mannequin at the end of the segment, and the mannequin appears to actually be human and is bleeding. The audience claps. The audience clapping seems to

represent the response of the imagined audience of the film. Nadine performs lesbian sexuality and violence for the pleasure of the audience. Linda's boyfriend Omar leaves the performance early because of his disgust, but this is because he has witnessed the reality of Nadine's sexuality. But the rest of the audience enjoys the performance because their role of spectator allows them to enjoy the pleasure of watching lesbian sexuality and violence without it threatening their own heterosexual relationships or lives. The position of the audience here mirrors the position of the film's spectator. This portrayal of lesbian sexuality does not threaten the male ego, but rather it pleases the heterosexual male watching it because of his distance from the film and because of the film's intention to pleasure an audience.

In addition, the director Franco places himself as a character into the film who sexually murders women. Franco's character Memmet is the character Agra's ex-husband. He is angry that his wife left him for Nadine, and so he reasserts his control by sexually murdering women. He ties Linda up, and tells her things like "you're beautiful when you're scared, but even more so in death" and "in death you will kiss me." The spectator would most likely not identify with this man because he murders women in order to revenge vampires for the inducement of the mental illness of his wife, but the spectator sympathizes with Linda because the camera often lines up her gaze with the gaze of the spectator. The spectator sympathizes with her falling for the vampire even if they might believe that she should be murdered. Memmet's torture and murder of women seem irrational. He seems to be doing it in order to achieve sexual gratification from these murders rather than for some other logical reason. Yet the spectacle of Memmet intimidating Agra is sexualized. Linda's legs are exposed, and the camera tilts to move up and down her legs. The majority of the scene takes place with Franco talking, while the fragmented image of Linda's legs serves as a background. This meta-textual placement of the director as a

sexual murderer self-consciously calls attention to his position as a director who films sexual murder in order to pleasure the audience. This scene calls attention to the fact that the spectator takes sadistic pleasure watching women get sexually murdered. Although this scene may give the opportunity for a meta level reflection of their own sadistic pleasure they take from viewing this film, the scene still seeks to pleasure the spectator.

But perhaps *Vampyros Lesbos* anticipates a lesbian spectator in addition to a heterosexual male one. Pavlović argues that “Jess Franco’s films are sites of female pleasure, offering enjoyment to the female spectator as much as to the male spectator” (118). This statement raises the question whether a narrative has the potential to simultaneously pleasure both a heterosexual male spectator and a lesbian female one. She continues, “The fluidity and oscillations of his narrative opens space for the fundamental instability of identifications along lines of gender, sex, and sexual preference” (Pavlović 118). In the film *Vampyros Lesbos*, Franco makes an interesting narrative decision to focus on the eyes of both Linda and Nadine. Laura Mulvey argues in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” that the male protagonist is both subject who gazes and object that is gazed at, while women are often reduced to the latter. She claims that the viewer identifies with the male protagonist and the male protagonist “projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls the events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence” (Mulvey 838). There are no male protagonists of this film, and the female protagonist is the one who does the looking, but the question arises whether the spectator identifies with the female protagonist, especially a lesbian spectator.

Vampyros Lesbos may feature supposedly queer women, but the women are not visually coded as queer. Both women are visually coded as heterosexual and feminine. They both have long, flowing hair and wear makeup and dresses. Of course some queer women appear feminine and desire feminine looking women. But the problem is that in nearly



Figure 5: The camera focusing on Linda's gaze while she watches Nadine perform

all vampire movies in the seventies, the “lesbian” vampire is visually coded as feminine and heterosexual (Weiss 106). These women are intended to attract a male heterosexual audience rather than a female one even if perhaps some women desire the women. I have argued before that queer women are presented as narcissistic, and women who have sex with the lesbian vampire become pathologically insane. These aspects of the film delegitimize and pathologize feminine queer sexuality. In addition, because Linda does directly kill the vampire rather than a male authority figure, heterosexuality triumphs over queer desire in the end.

Queer Temporality in *Wir Sind die Nacht*

Dennis Gansel wrote the script for his 2010 film *Wir sind die Nacht* in 1999, but it took him ten years to receive funding for the film because of the financial risk of producing a German film and the fear that German audiences would not enjoy the vampire genre. But after the success of the American *Twilight* series, he was able to gain support to produce the film (Gansel). Once again, this film exists in a conversation with other vampire films so it is important to see how this film reiterates and disrupts tropes of other American vampire films.

Many other American films self-consciously pick up a queer narrative in order to explore a queer way of life. In contemporary American film, the vampire is often explored through the genre of magic realism in which the film explores the life of living as a vampire. In fact, these vampire narratives are used in American television shows like *True Blood* and *The Vampire Diaries* where multiple seasons of shows are devoted to the exploration of vampire's lives. Dennis Gansel picks up this realist approach to the vampire genre in order to explore queer ways of life.

Very little research has been done on Dennis Gansel's 2010 German vampire film *Wir sind die Nacht*. I chose this film particularly because it offers an interesting portrayal of how vampirism offers women the opportunity to fulfill their "feminist" fantasies and lead lives outside of heteronormative markers of life like reproduction and marriage. We have seen how vampirism has been used in both of the films *Nosferatu* and *Vampyros Lesbos* to offer female liberation, but these films do not explore the question of female liberation in such an upfront and realist representation nor do they explore the queer implications of vampirism as a way of life. Unfortunately, like the overwhelming majority of vampire film of the past, the lead vampire Louise, who offers women this empowerment, is ultimately destroyed in order for Lena, the protagonist, to return to her heterosexual relationship and to live by patriarchal and heteronormative values. Although this film allows us to explore queer space and time that lies outside of heteronormative institutions of marriage and reproduction, the film ultimately deems these spaces and temporalities as unlivable.

We are introduced to the vampire gang while they are hijacking a jet and have killed all the passengers. A flight attendant remains, and the head vampire Louise (Nina Hoss) almost lets her live, but she doesn't have the right eyes. Then we introduced to the protagonist Lena (Karoline Herfurth) running from the young male cop Tom (Max Riemelt) after robbing a

Russian gang member that the police were planning on arresting. She outruns the cop, and the cop falls for her charm and tracks her down in order to take her on a date. Lena leaves the date early because she sees Louise spying on them.

Lena accidentally stumbles upon a rave that the vampire gang is hosting. The vampire Louise zooms in on her face with a camera and lets Lena into the club because of her eyes. Louise comes over and begins to flirt and dance with her. Louise leads her to the bathroom and eventually bites her neck. Lena runs away and begins to turn into a vampire. She is freaked out by this and eventually comes back to the place the rave was held in order to find out what they did to her. She initially refuses to drink the blood that the vampires offer her. The vampires then take her to a brothel in order to show her how vampires can use their power to kill evil men. When the man hits her and tries to have sex with her, Lena kills the man, and then begins to accept herself as a vampire. After she drinks the blood that the vampires offer her, she becomes beautiful, and they go on a series of vampire adventures that involve driving fancy cars, shopping, eating fancy food, doing drugs, and going clubbing. During the adventures, Lena maintains a secret relationship with the male cop Tom even though this relationship is not condoned by Louise.

After Nora (Anna Fischer) unnecessarily drains the blood of a security guard while the vampires were in a pool, Lena becomes angry with the vampires and their lifestyle. Eventually, the police find out who killed the pimps and clients at the brothel, and they come after them. This chase happens during the day, and Nora crashes her car and dies from the sunlight. The others escape and plan to immigrate to another country. Charlotte (Jennifer Ulrich) kills herself after seeing her daughter for one last time. Lena gets arrested after trying to see Tom one last time. Louise breaks into the jail to free Lena, but Lena doesn't want to go because she is in love with

Tom and doesn't want to be a vampire anymore so they battle. As the film concludes, Lena kills Louise so that Tom and Lena can be together without Louise's intervention.

The threat that lies in the vampires in *Wir Sind die Nacht* is not the sex that they engage in, but rather how they produce unregulated queer ways of life. I have argued thus far that Nosferatu produces queer sexual desire and the vampire Nadine in the film *Vampyros Lesbos* produces queer sexual identities. But the vampire Louise in *Wir Sind die Nacht* produces queer ways of life. Franco attempts to subvert heteronormative and patriarchal values by visually representing lesbian sex acts, but this visual representation did not threaten these values, but rather presented lesbian sexuality in order to fulfill the heterosexual male's scopophilic desire. The film *Wir Sind die Nacht* does not show lesbian sex acts, but rather the film seeks to portray a queer way of life that is free from these heteronormative and patriarchal restraints like reproduction and marriage. Foucault claims in his article "Friendship as a Way of Life" that "homosexuality threatens people's as a 'way of life' rather than as a way of having sex" (qtd. in Halberstam 1). Indeed, Lena is not tempted by Louise for her good looks and charm, as we see that Lena rejects Louise's love throughout the film, but rather the subculture that she offers. This subculture allows these women to explore their sexualities, escape motherhood and marriage, live according to alternative temporalities, and exist in queer spaces that escape regulation.

The queer subculture allows women to explore an alternative temporality. Jack Halberstam claims in his book *In a Queer Time and Place* that "queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (Halberstam 2). Indeed, vampires Louise and Nora exclaim how vampirism allows them to escape marriage and motherhood. Louise

proclaims, “For over two hundred years, no man, mortal or immortal, told me what to do. No king, no boss, no husband. What woman can make that claim?” She calls attention to the patriarchal nature and unequal gender constraints of marriage and celebrates how vampirism allows her to escape these constraints. In fact, Nora jokingly exclaims after this statement, “Long live the emancipation!” This statement uses the language of the feminist movement in order to call attention to the fact that vampirism allows them to live out their feminist fantasies. In addition, Nora proclaims “we eat, drink, sniff coke, and fuck as much as we want. But we never get fat, pregnant, or addicted.” Vampirism allows women to escape motherhood and patriarchal restraints on female sexuality.

Vampires are not ruled by heteronormative temporality centered on birth and marriage, freeing them to participate in the Berlin club scene as much as they want. Since a vampire’s skin burns with contact to the sun, they are forced to live at night. In fact, vampire temporality lines up with the temporality of the Berlin club scene. Berlin clubs start rather late in the night and do not end until early in the morning. Club goers in Berlin, especially the ones that go during the week, exist outside bourgeois heteronormative temporality. Although club going is common in Berlin among people in their twenties, it is difficult to maintain this lifestyle with a 9 to 5 job. Halberstam claims that “respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality” (Halberstam 7). Although it is deemed unrespectable to go out to clubs during the day, this is because productive work time is framed around the heterosexual family. Halberstam continues, “Family time refers to the normative scheduling of daily life (early to bed, early to rise) that accompanies the practice of child rearing,” therefore, “the timetable is governed by imagined set of children’s needs” (Halberstam 8). Since participants in the Berlin club scene are often young, they do not

necessarily need to get a job that follows the traditional bourgeois temporal framework, but people are supposed to “grow out” of the club scene in order to get a job, get married, and have kids. One way of creating a queer way of life is to reject this temporality.

Academic responses to subcultures often deem subcultures as youthful, even oedipal responses to parents and “parent movements.” Jack Halberstam shows how queer countercultures break with the traditional articulation of countercultures. He challenges the oedipalization of countercultures posed by Hebdige, Stuart Hall, and other members of the Birmingham school of cultural studies. For example, in his essay “Youth, Surveillance, and Display,” Hebdige articulates youth subcultures as registering dissatisfaction with the alienation from “parent cultures” that is both “a declaration of independence... and a confirmation of the fact of powerlessness” (*Queer Place*, qtd in Halberstam 160). Youth supposedly develop countercultures to rebel against their parents, but they grow out of these countercultures when they reach maturity and become parents themselves. Halberstam argues that because queer identified people often resist the heteronormative imperative of the home and the family, they often participate in subcultures longer. He argues that queer identified people often experience a “stretched out adolescence” that “challenges the conventional binary formulation of a life narrative divided by a clear break between youth and adulthood; this life narrative charts an obvious transition out of childish dependency through marriage and into adult responsibility through reproduction” (Halberstam 153). Although the vampire’s participation in the Berlin subculture may be seen as immature, this framework of viewing is shaped by a temporality in which maturity is defined by marriage and reproduction.

Interestingly, the film calls attention to the queer nature of Berlin clubs. The first time Lena walks into the club that the vampires are hosting, the camera focuses on a couple of two

androgynous looking females kissing before it shows the rest of the club. The camera follows Lena walking inside of the club, and then the camera pans to the queer couple kissing in a side room to match the vision of Lena. The camera only offers a quick glance at this queer couple and then quickly comes back to Lena walking. This quick pan is utilized in order to show a sort of discomfort and awkwardness in Lena.

The camera does this once again when Lena enters the club after being converted into a vampire and is walking into the club with her newly acquired vampire gang. Once again the camera oscillates between images of the ladies walking into the club, the vision of Lena, and Lena's facial reactions to what she sees. The camera quickly moves between images. One of these images shows Louise touching the lips of two girls with short twenties style hair kissing and then grabbing the butt of a gender androgynous male wearing a shirt covered in rhinestones and short shorts. Louise's response to the sight of queer sexuality and gender androgyny contrasts the awkward response of Lena in the previous club scene. This image is shortly followed by a chest of an extremely muscular guy wearing a corset with chains and an o-ring around the neck. He is also wearing rhinestone underwear, a garter belt, and thigh highs. The muscles of the man and the feminine clothing would seem to contrast one another, but the image offers an interesting representation of queer gender representation. The camera also pans to an image of another gender androgynous couple kissing. This couple consists of a male with long hair who is wearing a rhinestone shirt and a woman with sleeked back short hair. Although the couple is heterosexual, they are still presented as queer with their gender androgynous style.

Louise's response to the sight of queer sexuality and gender androgyny contrasts the awkward response of Lena in the previous club scene. The camera pans to images of her smiling at these images. Although the camera quickly presents images of the scene and these images are

often presented as through the eyes of Lena, the presentation of these images is not followed by a quick, awkward look away. In fact, she is surrounded by these images rather than separate from them. No longer is Lena positioned as an onlooker of a queer counterculture, but rather now that she is a vampire, she is part of it.

What is especially interesting about the club is that it is hidden. Only people who know about the club can get in. Lena initially follows someone into this club, and she could only find this club again with her vampire vision. The hidden nature of the club allows them to exist in a space that lies outside regulatory restraints. Indeed, many queer clubs are hidden in Berlin in order to escape regulation and homophobic violence. Since the club in *Wir sind die Nacht* consists mostly of queer women, it is assumed that the bouncer mostly only allowed in queer women. It is a queer space intended for queer people and women in order for them to escape the constraints of heteronormative and patriarchal values.



Figure 6: The crowd at the queer Berlin club with a queer couple flirting

Vampirism allows these women to exist in a space that lies outside of heteronormative and patriarchal regulation. The fact that no one knows about them allows them to escape control. The fact that they are physically invisible allows them to escape police regulation. After the vampires kill the men in the brothel and burn the brothel down, the police look at the tapes, and

they cannot see the vampires in these tapes because these vampires have no reflection. Not only do the vampires escape police regulation so that they can engage in criminal activity without getting caught, they have a sort of metaphoric invisibility because there is no knowledge surrounding their existence. This metaphoric invisibility allows them to escape the constraints of motherhood and marriage.

According to Foucault, bodies have to be known in order for them to be regulated. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, he defines his concept of the “political technology of the body” as the “‘knowledge’ of the body that is not exactly its science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them” (Foucault 26). There must be extensive knowledge of the body in order for the body to be regulated. The body needs to be regulated because “the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (Foucault 26). The body needs to be subjected to create it into a useful, productive body. Foucault argues in his book *The History of Sexuality Volume One* that biopolitics was pertinent to the development of capitalism and that capitalism “would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomenon of population to economic processes” (140-141). Non-reproductive bodies do not benefit a society that depends on reproduction, and therefore, these bodies are often stigmatized.

Since vampires are unknown and even partially physically invisible, they cannot be produced as productive subjects. Of course women are not just subjects of economic production, but they are also subjects of reproduction. They are supposedly supposed to make babies. Queer people are pathologized for their inability to reproduce. Discourses, like psychological discourses, pathologize subjects who do not uphold the values that discourses deem normal. Because it is “normal” to reproduce, people who do not reproduce are deemed abnormal.

Institutions center around reproduction. I noted earlier how even the temporal framework of institutions are centered around the heterosexual reproductive family. Queer people are excluded from these institutions, and this exclusion is justified because they are the ones who are deemed abnormal for not upholding heteronormative values. But instead of participating in these institutions, these vampires create new spaces, and these spaces cannot be regulated by heteronormative values because vampires exist outside this space of the known, they cannot be made into subjects of reproduction or production. Nor can they be produced as pathologized subjects.

In my piece about the film *Nosferatu*, I noted how the film represented the anxieties of the changing gender roles of women in the Weimar Republic and how vampirism allowed Ellen to explore her repressed sexual desire and to temporarily escape the confines of traditional ideal German womanhood. Interestingly, the character Charlotte in *Wir Sind die Nacht* became a vampire during the Weimar Republic. In fact, she was a silent film actress during this time when Louise, the head vampire in their crew, found her. Heide Schlüpmann notes in *The Uncanny Gaze* that “the actress has always been a ‘modern’ woman... she appropriated for herself, like a man, a public, self-determining existence and engaged in an experimental relationship to the world” (15). Actresses entered into the public sphere and had the opportunity to present her creativity and identity outside of the constraints of the domestic private sphere.



Figure 7: Charlotte dressed in Weimar-inspired fashion



Figure 8: Charlotte as a film actress during the Weimar Republic

Charlotte was not only an actress but a wife and a mother. Although the ability of women to enter into the workplace allowed them to gain financial and social independence from men and allowed them to enter spaces that they were normally not allowed to enter, women still eventually were expected to take on the domestic duties of mother and wife. Louise seduces Charlotte into the queer lifestyle of vampirism. Vampirism and lesbianism allowed her to escape her role as mother and wife in order to explore the queer lifestyle that Berlin offered at that time and continues to offer.

Yet in 2010, Charlotte comes to reject the queer lifestyle that Louise offers her and regrets leaving her child behind in order to pursue this lifestyle. In fact, after seeing her child for the last time, who is now an old lady laying on her death bed, Charlotte kills herself. Charlotte could not enjoy the temporality of a life without the heteronormative markers of life including birth and marriage. Although this is her personal decision, this film participates in a larger discourse. Halberstam notes that “respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality” (Halberstam 4). People who live according to values outside what is considered “normal” are often pathologized. Charlotte’s suicide seems to confirm that life without children is a pathological one. In addition, Charlotte’s suicide seems to impact Lena’s decision to leave Louise in favor of a heterosexual male.

In a way, *Wir Sind die Nacht* follows the bisexual love triangle trope outlined by Andrea Weiss in *Vampires and Violets* that I discussed in the previous section about *Vampyros Lesbos*, but the problem is not designated as queer desire; the problem is the queer way of life. There is a bisexual love triangle between the protagonist Lena, the vampire Louise, and the policeman Tom. The vampire threat is destroyed in order for Lena to pursue a romantic relationship with Tom. But it is not desire for Louise that threatens Lena's relationship with Tom. It is the fact that Lena's lifestyle does not allow her to engage in a relationship with Tom. Tom is not only a heterosexual male, but he is a law enforcer. He literally enforces the rules that regulate society. When Lena calls on him to come see her one last time before she leaves the country, he calls on the rest of the police force to follow him so that they can arrest her. It does not matter that he loves her. He must above enforce the law. It is clear that she can no longer inhabit the queer, unregulated and invisible space that the vampires inhabit as she desires a person that the vampires hide from. In addition, she fears having a life like Charlotte where she regrets missing the opportunity to get married and have children.

Although the film explores the queer spaces and a queer "way of life" that allows women to escape heteronormative and patriarchal restraints, the film eventually pathologizes this unregulated way of life. Without regulated sexuality, female sexuality will become excessive and dangerous to men. Although these women are physically violent and physically kill men in order to fulfill their sexual desire, this physical violence metaphorically represents emotional violence. For example, Nora utilizes the opportunity to escape gender norms by engaging in as much vampire sex as possible. When a man who she was previously flirting with offers her a rose, she yells at him and tells him to leave her alone or she will have him fired. She says that the reason

that she yelled at him was because she was afraid of hurting him because she wouldn't be able to control herself. Indeed, she ends up waking up to his dead body lying next to her.

This situation reinforces the idea that if women's sexuality is unregulated by norms, particularly norms surrounding motherhood, then women will not be able to exercise self-restraint. By essentializing women's sexuality as dangerous and uncontrollable even though these vampires have an alternative to human blood, the film reiterates a dominant discourse that women cannot control themselves without regulatory gender norms. The film, therefore, ultimately rejects the type of feminism that encourages sexual liberation of women. Linda notes that men were all killed off because they were too greedy, but the fact that almost all vampires are killed in this film implies that if women are given the same power that men have, they will eventually destroy themselves in the same way that men destroy themselves from excess. It ultimately upholds the gender norms that it initially sought to transgress.

The realist approach to this film's aesthetics allows the film to delegitimize entire ways of life. In my analysis, I have shown how the films I examined have progressed from pathologizing desire to pathologizing identities to pathologizing ways of life. Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish* that the political dream of controlling a society requires the "penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power" (198). It is interesting how film has become more and more involved in representing lives in such intimate detail. This intimate interest in people's lives has the potential to become increasingly regulatory because it can reinforce norms by representing how certain ways of lives should be rejected.

Conclusion:

A certain trend occurs in my thesis that shows how German vampire film has changed from pathologizing queer desire to pathologizing queer sexualities to pathologizing queer ways of life. I believe that this trend occurs because the more queer sexuality gains transparency and the more integrated queer identified people become, the more intimate and detailed that discourse surrounding queer sexuality becomes. There is more potential in a highly detailed discourse for the personal aspects of people's lives to be regulated by the discursive creation of norms. Vampire film has the potential to articulate queer desire, queer sexual identities, and queer ways of life in a manner that does not pathologize or delegitimize them, but there should be further research on films that manage to do this, and there should be more films produced that attempt to achieve this goal.

I personally have not seen any examples of a vampire film that does all three of these things well. It is difficult for films to portray vampirism in a positive light because of their blood sucking tendencies. One may wonder if the vampire genre should be abandoned all together to articulate queer subjectivities, but series like *True Blood* portrays vampirism as not necessarily a precondition for pathologization, and many films and television series provide blood substitutions so that they do not have to kill. The connection of vampire film and the horror genre posits vampires as a source of fear. The films of the horror genre often end with a return of order in order to undermine the possibility of this subversion of norms to exist in reality. But many vampire films separate themselves from this genre and often choose to use the fantasy genre instead, and this fantasy genre allows the spectator to sympathize with the vampires.

I am intrigued by the potential for vampire film to portray queer subjectivity because of the vampire's ability to escape heteronormative institutions. Queer theorist Gayle Rubin proposes in her article "Thinking Sex" that "making a queer world has required the development

of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation” (171). Although reality often prohibits the ability to achieve these kind of intimacies since people depend on these institutions for survival, a fantastical portrayal of a queer world that is not dependent on heteronormative institutions could provide an envisioning of a queer world that the real world could strive for.

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